

Greetings Friends,

We are excited to celebrate another year and all of the great things the Montana Natural History Center accomplished in 2021 with you!

We re-opened our exhibit hall to the public just in time for spring break, and MNHC excitedly transitioned our programming from the online, virtual formats necessary in 2020 back to more traditional, in-person learning experiences!

And what a fantastic time staff, volunteers, and our board of directors had, once again being together, in person, with inquisitive minds, youth and adult alike.

As spring gave way to summer we welcomed many Discovery Day Camp participants—387 in all! The smiles on the faces of campers, staff, and parents were big and so rewarding to witness!

The smiles continued on our staff's and board's faces as we entered the school year and got back to our routine of guiding western Montana fourth and fifth graders on field trips in nature and joining them in their classrooms for nature and science exploration and understanding.

As MNHC closed out our 30th year, we did so by rejoicing in another great year of learning about the natural world and savoring the return of face-to-face, in person programming. What's more, we are excited and looking forward to a very bright future—another 30 years of curiosity, learning, and excellence.

There

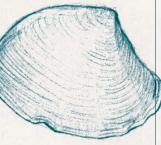
Thurston Elfstrom EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Katu

Katie Guffin
PRESIDENT, MNHC
BOARD OF DIRECTORS





This year's annual report features artwork from artist and MNHC teaching naturalist Jenah Mead. This art was created for MNHC's newest exhibit, Montana's Ancient Past. Stop by our Center to see it in person!



2021 BUDGET

\$887,795

Total Net Assets: \$1,884,207

FUNDING

Additional Revenue:	8%
Business Donations:	4%
Grants:	31%
Program Fees:	17%
Individual Donations:	39%

EXPENDITURES

Facilities:	1%
Publications & Outreach:	5%
Management:	14%
Exhibits:	14%
Community Programs:	13%
Summer Camps:	23%
Fundraisers:	9%
School Programs:	20%

\$ raised in license plate

sales: **\$14,640**

IMPACT

While not without its difficulties, 2021 began to feel a little more

normal. We welcomed 2,232 people into our exhibit space this year. We ran summer camps and field trips, trained Master Naturalists, and even opened our newest exhibit: Montana's Ancient Past. There was so much interest in the exhibit's grand opening that we had to add a second viewing for the evening! 80 guests joined us in celebrating the finalization of this beautiful new space.

While we have loved getting together in person once again and exploring our love of nature, one positive from the pandemic was realizing how much we could increase our program reach through online options. In 2021 we continued to offer and grow our virtual programming, with our online programs reaching people in AL, CA, CO, FL, GA, IA, IL, MA, MD, MI, MN, MS, MT, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SC, SD, UT, VA, WA, WI, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Panama!

As always, it is our passion for our shared mission to promote and cultivate the appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of nature through education that keeps us working diligently and continually evolving as an organization.

CUE THE 2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

MNHC engaged over **13,000** people in 2021

\$12,825 awarded in scholarships. MNHC is dedicated to expanding accessibility to our programs to connect adults and children to nature, regardless of their financial situations.

13,583

YouTube views with a total of

2,061 hours of watch time

68,696 page views of our website's educational content



OUR 2021 PROGRAMS

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

8,091 students were impacted by our educational programming in person, online, in homeschool, and beyond!

Visiting Naturalist in the Schools (VNS)

While we began our year delivering online content, in September 2021 our teaching naturalists returned to the classrooms, forests, and hands-on nature education we all missed so much!

VNS connects professional naturalists with fourth- and fifth-grade students in classrooms across western Montana. Each student receives a journal to record observations, practice nature journaling, and develop their reading and writing skills. Our naturalists teach and mentor students by encouraging ongoing inquiry and curiosity about the natural world. Our curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards that also contribute to curriculum goals in literacy, critical thinking, and communication.

66 And, again, congratulations to you and the VNS team. You created and delivered great programming throughout the pandemic and maybe brought a little bit of normalcy to the school year. Even though you were not there in person, each of you were able to mentor and excite the students about the natural world by demonstrating great naturalist behaviors and skills in the videos. I hope you and all MNHC staff are as proud of you as I am!

-Kelly Dix, Master Naturalist, Science Educator, and VNS Volunteer, Spring 2021

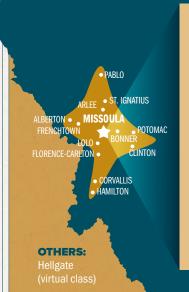


\$3,245
in scholarships awarded to VNS schools

1,091
students in the VNS program

24 schools served with

59 classrooms participating



MISSOULA SCHOOLS

Chief Charlo DeSmet Franklin Hawthorne Jeanette Rankin Lewis and Clark Lowell Missoula Christian Montessori Paxson Rattlesnake Russell St. Joseph Target Range

16 volunteers gave 213 hours through our VNS program alone!

Our staff provided **468** hours of direct instruction.



The Interactive Distance Learning Program delivers live, interactive programming through video conferencing across the state of Montana and beyond.

The ID Naturalist

LIVE! program brings professional naturalists into third-through fifth-grade classrooms through the use of video conferencing to teach science and natural history across rural Montana. Students get to experience naturalist-led classroom lessons—most of which include outdoor exploration—via monthly virtual nature and science experiences.

ID Naturalist is a

subscription-based service. Educators gain access to ten web-based video lessons presented by a teaching naturalist that can be opened at the convenience of the teacher and in the comfort of the classroom.

ID NATURALIST LIVE

schools

Classrooms

250 students

ID NATURALIST

and homeschools

210 students

Streamable Learning

The Montana Natural History Center has been a content provider for Streamable Learning since 2019. This innovative programming connects districts and classrooms across North America for live and interactive educational events.



The Wings Over Water (WOW) Osprey Program brings STEM research into middle and high school classrooms across the U.S. and sparks student interest in biology, physics, chemistry, math, and engineering through the study of Ospreys. The program starts by building STEM capacity for teachers through a week-long workshop in Missoula. Teachers return to the classroom with a rich curriculum which is built around Next Generation Science Standards and can be tailored to each classroom's needs.

WOW

We were able to run a virtual summer teacher training once again in 2021!

Homeschool Naturalists runs September-April and gives

students the opportunity to learn about the natural history of Montana while gaining naturalist skills and making friends. Each month the group explores our place in the ecosystems. We love using the naturalist tools of science, writing, and art.

STREAMABLE LEARNING

10 classes taught

3,500 participants from

6 states and

Canadian provinces

REACH: AL, CA, CO, FL, GA, IA, IL, MD, MT, NC, NY, PA, SC, SD, VA, WI, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan

wow

teachers participated in the summer course.

The curriculum impacts more than

students across the country.



preschoolkindergarten students

elementary students

middle school students

families served

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Saturday Kids' Activities returned in full force in July. From the second weekend in July to the first week in September we ran Saturday Kids' activities every Saturday. After September, we began to offer this program twice a month. We learned all about animal tracks and how to identify them, examined various kinds of skulls, competed in Animal Olympics and learned about the specialized things that animal bodies can do, and so much more! Every month features a new topic. The exploration and activities are suitable for a wide age range, so the whole family can be involved!

The **miniNaturalists Pre-K program** engages young children in the exploration of the natural world through fun hands-on activities and games. The program emphasizes observation, sensory skills, and imagination to cultivate a positive connection with nature at an age when children are just beginning to investigate the world around them.

Summer Camps returned and took over! Our full-day, weeklong, nature-themed camps ran all summer long for preschool (age 4 and up) through 5th grade. We were thrilled to open our doors once again and fill our exhibit hall with the merriment of children learning. Due to smoky air conditions throughout the summer we moved many of the programs inside and closed the exhibit hall to the public yet again. Our staff pivoted quickly and we managed to have a successful and fun summer exploring nature—even if indoors occasionally.

53 kids and 21 adults participated in the

programs we held after we began again in July.



children and their parents participated in the

Ifun and imaginative programs we began again in September 2021.

SUMMER CAMPS

12,825 was awarded in summer camp scholarships to children in need.

387 kids participated in

student-to-instructor ratio









NEW EXHIBIT AND CENTER UPDATES!

Montana's Ancient Past:

MNHC's newest exhibit celebrates Montana's fascinating geological past through fossils! This exhibit also features the incredible artwork—large and small—of artist and MNHC teaching naturalist Jenah Mead. By highlighting the previous five large extinction events, this exhibit is as timely as it is beautiful. The exhibit ends with a discussion on climate change, climate actions we can all take, and poses the question, "When will the sixth major extinction happen?"

This exhibit was made possible thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a partnership with the University of Montana Paleontology Center, and the tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers. Make sure to stop by the Center to check it out!

Salish Immersion Project:

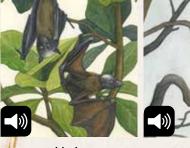
At the end of 2020, MNHC staff began working with Aspen Decker, a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and a Salish language revivalist, to create an immersion initiative to bring Salish language and culture into MNHC programming and operations. We continued this partnership through 2021 by adding a land acknowledgement into our programming and including text and audio of Salish names for mammal and bird specimens in our exhibit area.

From publishing pieces on Salish history and culture in *Montana Naturalist* magazine and Field Notes on Montana Public Radio to incorporating Salish knowledge into our Master Naturalist and Visiting Naturalist in the Schools lesson plans, this project is intended to help MNHC create a diverse perspective of Salish people, bringing awareness of Salish culture, language, and knowledge to the greater Missoula community.



Land acknowledgement:

The Montana Natural History Center is located within the traditional homelands of the *Tatáyagn* (Bitterroot Salish) and *Qlispélix*^w (Kalispel) peoples who have lived here since time immemorial. The Montana Natural History Center is dedicated to the recognition of the first peoples of Missoula and the integration of Salish language, culture, and Indigenous knowledge.





Nspšnmé Snowy Owl

Łmłam aye? Frog



Open AIR Artist in Residence

Open AIR is a place-based Artist-in-Residence program that connects artists and the community with unique sites in Western Montana. We were thrilled to continue our partnership with Open AIR again in 2021, after putting it on pause in 2020, to host two Artists in Residence: Madison Mayfield in May and June and Tracy Hall in September and October.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Learning and nature exploration aren't just for kids! We provide nature-based education for adults who are fascinated by the natural world and want to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Montana's wild places and creatures, become better writers, and hone their artistic abilities.

1,350 adults participated in nature writing and nature journaling workshops, lectures, field days, and other adult educational programming in 2021.

The Master Naturalist Program is designed for adults who want to stoke their curiosity, deepen their knowledge of the natural world, and give back to their communities in new ways. We offer a range of programs to fit the needs of a diverse community, but all the classes share a common goal of providing participants with the skills to interpret Montana's flora, fauna, and landscape. In 2021 we continued to offer both in-person and online versions of this course.

66 I had the best week I have had in a long time. A great group of like-minded people coming together to expand our awareness of nature! And Christine was absolutely amazing. Her knowledge and ability to teach that knowledge is next-level.

-Summer 2021 Master Naturalist

It was the most enjoyable class I have taken in years. The knowledge and enthusiasm of the instructors was truly contagious. I got exactly what I needed for my desired self-reorientation to the natural world. I knew what I needed and luckily, I knew where to find it. Thanks very much. And, I'm not done by any means.

- Fall 2021 Master Naturalist





52 *Field Notes* aired on Montana Public Radio, **42** of them new—more than ever before! Most were written by participants in our Field Notes writing workshops.

Every week since 1991, *Field Notes*, written by naturalists, students, and listeners, has inquired about Montana's natural history. *Field Notes* airs two times per week on *Montana Public Radio*: Wednesday at 3:55 p.m. and Saturday at 11:54 a.m.

Field Notes is also available as a podcast! Subscribe on iTunes, Google Play, or wherever you listen to your podcasts.

FIELD NOTES

We offered

3 online Field Notes writing workshops this year.

30 people participated.

66 Thank you, thank you, thank you. This class was extremely grounding in a period of big transition in my life, and it really bolstered my self-confidence to sit with a group of strangers every week and feel seen and heard. Knowing that I have the capacity to sit down and write words that make people feel excited to go outside is an incredible gift, and I am very grateful for this class for it.

-Zola Kell, fall 2021 Field Notes writing workshop participant

Nature Journaling Conference

MNHC hosted its first in-person Nature Journaling Conference in May of 2021. 27 participants celebrated their love of nature journaling by learning from four experienced artists and instructors.

Hannah Hinchman, Nancy Seiler, Claire Emery, and Jenah Mead.

Throughout the weekend they learned a variety of nature journaling tips and techniques such as event-mapping, drawing native plants and birds, shading techniques, and so much more!

Certified Interpretive Guide Course

In partnership with the National Association for Interpretation, MNHC offers a Certified Interpretive Guide course for present and future interpretive program educators. Through classroom and field sessions, this course teaches the fundamentals of program development, delivery, and excellence in interpretation.

CERTIFIED
INTERPRETIVE
GUIDE COURSE

29 participants

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

Teacher Benefits Program

All K-12 teachers actively employed in a public or private Montana school are eligible.

103 teachers

Benefits include:

- Free individual membership
- Special invitations to educator events and trainings
- Discounts on museum tours, classroom naturalist presentations, and ID Nature programs

Go to **MontanaNaturalist.org/teacher-benefits-program** to see the full list of benefits and to sign up.

Montana Naturalist magazine published 2 new issues.

16,000 magazines were distributed locally and to national subscribers.

License Plates

You don't have to wait until your current plates expire to pick up an MNHC plate! \$14,640 raised in license plate sales!

880 plates sold

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers, board members, and committee members are invaluable to our organization and are integral to the success and high quality of our programming. We are grateful to have been able to see some of our wonderful volunteers in person again in 2021.

Thank you to every volunteer who donated their time in 2021!

We had **100** volunteers donate **1091** hours in 2021. We look forward to providing more opportunities to volunteer in 2022.

We are always looking for more volunteers, and we offer a wide range of opportunities. From helping at the front desk or assisting with field trips to adding your creativity and ideas to our Annual Auction & Banquet or Spring Luncheon, we are sure there is a great fit for you! Apply to be a volunteer here:

MontanaNaturalist.org/volunteer/

MEMBERSHIP

Become a member today and enjoy the following benefits:

 Unlimited free admission to our Center, Kids' Discovery Room, and Nature Adventure Playground **415** members in 2021.

Let's get to 500 in 2022!

 Free admission to the miniNaturalist Pre-K
 Program and naturalist-led

summer camps

- Program and naturalist-led hikes

 Discounts on classes, programs, lectures, and
- Free use of naturalist backpacks for your outdoor adventure (includes binos, field guides, etc.)
- Annual subscription to Montana Naturalist magazine

Through the Association for Science-Technology Centers, MNHC members receive reciprocal free admission to over 300 other science centers in cities including Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, and more! For the full list, go to astc.org.

MAKE A GIFT

Support our critical work of educating future conservationists and our community with a gift today. Or consider becoming a monthly donor!

Please visit MontanaNaturalist.org/donate.

Consider including MNHC in your estate plans.

Help us connect people with nature for generations to come. Please consider MNHC in your estate planning. **Please visit MontanaNaturalist.org/planned-giving.**















ANNUAL BANQUET AND AUCTION SPONSORS

Title Event Sponsor

Blackfoot Communications

Event Sponsors

Republic Services Alpine Physical Therapy Good Food Store First Security Bank

Sponsors

3 Rivers Pediatric Dentistry Anderson Zurmuehlen Attorneys at Law Bohyer, Erickson, Beaudette & Tranel Axiom Solutions Axis Physical Therapy Big Bear Sign Co. Chontos Design Clearwater Credit

D.A. Davidson Edward Jones

Union

First Interstate Bank Grizzly Liquor

INK Realty Group Kruser's Mobile

Services
Lambert Family
Chiropractic

Langel & Associates Certified Public Accountant

Mann Mortgage

Monida Healthcare Network

MPG Ranch

Native Yards

NorthWestern Energy

Partners Creative

Pintler Wealth Management Group of

Wells Fargo Advisors

Rocky Mountain Eye Center

SG Long Financial

Stockman Bank Twin Cranes Dental

Group

Western MT Clinic

Willow Creek Capital Management, Inc.

Windfall

We could not operate without the generosity of our many supporters and partners. We thank you all for your ongoing support!



COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Animal Wonders
Be Bear Aware
Campaign

Big Sky Documentary Film Festival

Blackfoot Challenge Boys and Girls Club

Clark Fork Coalition

Climate Smart Missoula

Fish, Wildlife, and Parks – Jocko River Trout Hatchery

Five Valleys Land Trust

The Flagship Program
Free Cycles

Friends of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

Garden City Harvest Girls Scouts of

Montana & Wyoming

Glacier Institute

Hellgate Hunters and Anglers

Home ReSource Inspired Classroom

International Wildlife Film Festival

Missoula County Weed District

Missoula Butterfly House & Insectarium Missoula Federal Credit Union

Missoula in Motion

Missoula PaddleHeads

Missoula Parks and Recreation Conservation Lands Program

Missoula Search and Rescue

Missoula Smokejumper Visitor Center

Missoula Symphony Association

Montana Audubon Center

Montana Discovery Foundation

Montana Environmental Education Association

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Montana Museum of Art and Culture

Montana Native Plant Society

Montana Office of Public Instruction

Montana Osprey Project

Montana Outdoor Science School

Montana Public Radio Montana Rail Link

Montana State Parks

MPG Ranch

MSU-Flathead Reservation Extension Office

National Bison Range

National Military Family Association

National Wildlife Federation

North Missoula Community Development Corporation

Open AIR

Owl Research Institute Park Side Credit Union

Partners Creative

PEAS Farm

Raptor View Research

Institute Soil Cycle

Southgate Mall

spectrUM

Streamable Learning

Swan Valley Connections

Teller Wildlife Refuge

Thunder Road Farm

Travelers' Rest State Park and Travelers' Rest Connection

Montana Trout Unlimited

Trout Unlimited

University of Montana Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum

University of
Montana: Bird Ecology
Lab, Broader Impacts
Group, Ecology and
Organismal Biology,
Environmental Studies
Department, Office
of Civic Engagement,
School of Education,
Wildlife Biology
Department

University of Montana Paleontology Center

USFS, Fire Lab

USFS, Lolo National Forest, Missoula Ranger District

Watson's Children's Center

YWCA

